

Anatomy of a fish fry: baking, frying, texting, schmoozing

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By Tom Maguire | Associate editor

Hungry as they are, they're charmers too, those fish-fry patrons.

Christian Brothers Academy senior Sam Kuehner was a happy runner for the St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Sacrament Lenten Fish Fry on March 11 in Syracuse. What did they tell him as he ran their dinners to the cars?

"A lot of 'You're doing a really nice job for a lot of people,'" he said in the cafeteria at Blessed Sacrament School. He also got a few comments of "You're handsome" from some of the older ladies."



Denise Gillies is one of the volunteers in the kitchen. She and her husband, Tom Gillies, have been volunteering at the fish fry for five years.

The fish fry gets 300 people every Friday night during Lent (closed on Good Friday though); serving them are 30 to 40 volunteers from the linked parishes of Blessed Sacrament and St. Vincent; St. Daniel's Parish; CBA; Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. High School; and Bishop Ludden Jr./Sr. High. In charge of the dinner are Rob James and Griffin Harmon. Proceeds go to St. Vincent's Church, Blessed Sacrament Church and Blessed Sacrament School.

CBA's Kuehner, who previously attended Blessed Sacrament School, said he hears a lot of "Keep the change" too.

The parishes are "able to work together, and also we're able to eat together," said volunteer Dr. Maria Iannolo, a Blessed Sacrament parishioner. She added that she has "met so many people within my own parish and I didn't even know their names before the fish fry. ... It's great fun. Father [John] Rose said

that you have to build the relationship before you can build the mission. So this is helping us build

Naturally, then, his job is to collect the money from the pleasant people pulling up in their cars. "I try to be friendly with them, joke a little bit," he said.

Also helping with the cars was David Carnie, a Third Degree Knight in the K of C and Vice Chairman of the St. Daniel's Pastoral Council. "I'm here because it's about community. ... This is a great cause," he said. If it's a preorder, he'll text down to the kitchen and send a runner—"very efficient system we have."

The remaining dates for the curbside-pickup Fried or Baked Haddock Dinner at the Blessed Sacrament School parking lot and cafeteria, 3129 James St.: 4-7 p.m. March 18 and 25, and April 1 and 8. You can call ahead or drive up behind Blessed Sacrament Church and order on the spot at 3127 James St. Delivery is also available.

To place a delivery pre-order: Call Mary at 315-382-6652, before 2 p.m. on the day of the fish fry. Deliveries go out at 4:30 p.m. and again at 5:30 p.m. Please keep orders to a 5-mile radius. Cash and checks are accepted.

To get curbside pickup: Place your order when you pull up or call ahead to one of the following numbers between 4 and 6:30 p.m. on fish-fry nights: 315-380-4946, 315-420-9322 or 315-399-2770. Patrons will enter the Blessed Sacrament parking lot via James Street and be directed to a line. Cash and checks are preferred, but credit cards may be accepted.

The \$12 meal includes coleslaw, roll and your choice of French fries, salt potatoes or mac & cheese (side of fries or salt potatoes, \$3; side of mac & cheese, \$5).

On March 11, Dr. Iannolo was handing out stunning rosaries that she had crafted with her daughter.

"You leave with Jesus," she said.